

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

BY THE PRESIDENT,

THE VENERABLE ARCHDEACON HOSE M. A.

DELIVERED ON THE 28TH FEBRUARY, 1878.

IF I understand aright the duty which devolves upon me to-night in the position with which you have honoured me, I have two things to do. The first is to explain, at some greater length than has been done hitherto, the objects which the promoters have had in view in seeking to establish the Straits Asiatic Society; and the second is to point out the means by which it is hoped these objects may be attained.

The primary object of the Society, as defined in the Rules, is “to investigate subjects connected with the Straits of Malacca and the neighbouring countries.” The expression “neighbouring countries” was selected as being a wide and comprehensive term, in order that the Society might feel as little restricted as possible in accepting communications respecting any part of Southern and Eastern Asia. But no doubt the attention of the Society will be chiefly concentrated upon the Peninsula of Malacca, as far North as the Tenasserim Provinces, and the great Indian Archipelago, that wonderful chain of Equatorial Islands stretching from Sumatra on the West to New Guinea of the East. Science is greatly in want of some general term to describe this great portion of the earth’s surface, including both the continental and the insular divisions of it. For, though the different parts of it vary from one another in a great many particulars, yet they are in no slight degree homogeneous, and it would be a great convenience to be able to speak of them all under one common name. Several have been suggested, and of them all I prefer the name ‘Malaya,’ as being at once the most simple, and the most intelligible. For throughout this whole wide-spread district, the language spoken is either Malay or some closely allied form of speech; and Malay itself is to a very great extent the *lingua franca*—the common medium of commu-

nication for business purposes between the inhabitants of different races.*

This 'Malaya' then (if I may, at least on this occasion, use the word) being our field, we have to consider what work has been already done in it, and what remains to be done.

And in speaking of work already accomplished, I must hasten to do honour to one great name, which such a Society as this must always hold in the greatest respect—it is almost needless to say I mean the name of J. R. Logan. No doubt there were great men who came before him here; men who were possessed of scientific knowledge, and patient observation, and intellectual power, and who brought these great gifts to bear upon the manifold wonders which nature has accumulated in this part of the world; and in their writings gave to their own time, and to posterity, the benefit of their labour and research. Mr. Logan had his predecessors, "*Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona multi*," and we have not to lament with the poet, at least in the case of all of them, that they lie overshadowed by the long night of oblivion, unwept and unknown. Marsden, Leyden, Raffles, Newbold, not to mention Portuguese and Dutch travellers who came before them, will ever be illustrious names in the history of these countries. But to Mr. Logan belongs the special honour of having not only observed much, and thought much, and written much himself, but also of having associated together with himself other thinkers, and of having contrived a plan by which the knowledge acquired by some of his contemporaries and fellow residents in this Colony, and in the neighbouring Settlements, might be recorded and published. This was, as you know, by means of the "Journal of the Indian Archipelago." The town of Penang justly boasts of its handsome memorial of this remarkable man; but the most enduring and the most worthy monument of him is his own Journal, of which for 15 years, from 1847 to 1862, he was the Editor, and to the papers of which he was also the principal contributor. If there is any member of this Society who has not yet done so, I would recommend him to read the introductory article in the first number, from Mr. Logan's own pen, upon "The present condition of the Indian Archipelago." I think he cannot fail to rise from the perusal of it full of admiration of the genius and culture of the

* In connection with this point the following passage from Mr. Logan's writings may be of interest:—

"If the word "Malay" be confined to the Malays and their language; and "the word "Malayan" be exclusively used as a generic term for all the "races and languages of what the French call *Malaisie*, we may dispense "with the indefinite word "Archipelago" (Journal I. A. vol: III p. 229.)

author, and also impressed with a very deep sense of the importance of those great problems which are presented here to the student, and the merchant, to the politician, and the philanthropist.

The establishment of such a journal in a young Colony, such as the Straits Settlements was in the year 1847, was a bold enterprise for a single individual to undertake. But Mr. Logan was very ably supported. It is surprising, and most encouraging, to find how much of local talent and information came to light, as soon as he had provided the opportunity for it to do so. It was evidently a time of great scientific power, and of much literary activity in the Straits. Contributors from all classes came forward. There was the Governor of the Straits for the time being, and other Government officers. There were Ecclesiastics, including Clergymen of the Church of England, Roman Catholic Priests, and Ministers of various Protestant communions. There were Military men and Naval men. There were Lawyers and Doctors, Merchants and Planters. There were Frenchmen and Germans, Dutchmen and Swiss, and, I am pleased to add, as a promise for the future, one Chinaman. Of these only too many have passed away. Some are bringing their lives to a close elsewhere. Some remain among us, and have given the prestige of their names to this new undertaking, and will, we may hope, contribute to the publications of our Society some of the stores of knowledge and experience which they have been gathering since the old days. Some are represented by their descendants, as in the case of the leader and chief of them all, whose son, Mr. D. Logan, you have elected to be the Vice-President of the Society in Penang.

And before bringing this reference to Mr. Logan's coadjutors to an end, I cannot help remarking with great pleasure, that in the list of them are to be found, not only the names of those whose connection with these countries was more or less temporary, but also of some, who, for generations, have made their family home here. When I come across such names as Baumgarten, and Neubronner, and Westerhout in connection with the advancement of science in the Straits, I cannot help hoping that some of those who bear those names, and other like names, in the present generation, may be stirred up by the example of those who have gone before them, to use the great advantages they have, such as their familiarity with the language of the place, and their inherited power of enduring its climate, in seeking knowledge for its own sake, not merely for the purpose of applying it to their own personal and material benefit, but in order to contribute something to the common stock.

The work done by Mr. Logan and the gentlemen who were associated with him covers a great deal of ground. There are some very valuable papers upon the *Geography* both of Malaya as a whole, and of various portions of it; as well as most interesting accounts of tours undertaken by individuals, in which Geographical notes are interspersed among other facts which the tourist observed and recorded. There is some *Geological* information—and some account of the *Mineral* treasures of the district, both those that are known and those that are supposed to exist. There are useful notices of the *Natural Products*, and of the *Modes of Agriculture*, especially of the methods of treating the most important articles of commerce. The science of *Ethnology* is largely dealt with by Mr. Logan himself, and his papers upon the various aboriginal races will probably continue to be the most reliable authority upon the subject of these races, which are, as usual, fast disappearing as civilization spreads inland. A great deal of information is supplied concerning the *Languages* and *Dialects* of the numerous nations living within the district; with copious vocabularies, forming a very substantial contribution to the science of *Comparative Philology*. Then there are chapters of *History* both of the European Colonies, and of the Native States. There are examples and translations of *Native Literature*, amongst which I must mention a most interesting abstract of the “*Sejâra Malayu*,” or Malay Annals, by the present Attorney-General, the Hon’ble Thomas Braddell, which puts that curious piece of Malayan antiquities and history within the reach of the English reader. There are papers upon questions affecting *Health*, such as Dr. Little’s discussions of the effects of opium, and of the causes of the local forms of fever. And, lastly, there is a large collection of statistical information upon the subjects of *Population*, *Trade*, *Weather*, and *Temperature*.

I have not touched upon a great many of subjects that are discussed in this Journal, such for instance as *Natural History*, upon every department of which attention was bestowed by some one or other of the writers; but I think I have said enough to shew that, even during Mr. Logan’s time, a great deal of knowledge was acquired and preserved. Much, too, has been done subsequently by Government Officers, by private individuals, and by distinguished travellers such as Wallace and others. In fact what is known of South-Eastern Asia only appears small, when it is compared with what remains yet unknown. That residuum is indeed vast, and it is for the purpose of endeavouring to diminish it, that the Straits Asiatic Society has come into existence.

It will be impossible for me to do more than just glance at some few of the subjects upon which additional knowledge is urgently required, and may be reasonably hoped for. Let us begin with Geography. Now, I need say nothing to this meeting about the almost total ignorance in which we live of some of the more distant and inaccessible portions of the great extent of land about which this Society proposes to collect and publish information. I need not remind you how completely New Guinea is a "terra incognita;" or even of how little is known of the interior of Borneo and Sumatra. Let us look nearer home. It would probably astonish some people to learn how extremely little accurate knowledge we possess even of the Malay Peninsula itself. Fortunately we have before us what will give us a very clear understanding of the limits of our acquaintance with this region, which lies at our very doors. The uncompleted map which is displayed on this wall, is one that is now being carefully prepared under the able direction of Mr. Skinner. I hope when these remarks of mine are concluded, that Mr. Skinner will himself correct me if, in the few words I have to say upon his important work, I unintentionally convey a wrong impression; and that he will give us any additional information respecting it, which he may think it desirable to communicate now. And I may mention that he has promised the Council of the Society a paper upon the subject, in which he will no doubt state very much more clearly than I could do, what is the present condition of our knowledge of the Geography of the Peninsula.

But I will ask you now to look at that map: observe the immense spaces which are entirely blank, or have merely the name of the native Government to which they are supposed to be attached written across them, such as Kelantan, Patani, Tringganu; and compare them with the few districts, almost entirely on the Western Coast, in which the mountains are sketched in, the course of the rivers traced, and the names of towns and villages inserted. Does it not remind some of us of what the map of Africa used to look like in our school days, before the discoveries of Livingstone and his successors? Yet it is not of a vast continent like Africa, upwards of 2,000 miles in breadth, that we are speaking, but of a narrow peninsula which, at its greatest breadth, only extends to about 200 miles, from the Straits of Malacca to the China Sea. This Peninsula has been known to Europeans for just 370 years, and that map shews you all, or almost all, that Europeans have learned about its geography in that time. But the map is also a sign that a great effort is being made to bring this state of ignorance to an end. It is, as you see,

little more than a skeleton map at present, drawn to a large scale, but it is getting gradually filled up as information comes in.

And information does come from many sources. The other day I saw a map which had been sent in by the Siamese Government, which I considered a great curiosity, so much so that I hope it may be exhibited in the Raffles Museum. This was to show an important piece of boundary line far up in the north. Then there is another map being made by the Maharaja of Johor in the south. Trained surveyors are clearing up old puzzles in various parts between these extremes. And every officer in the English Colonies, or in the Native States, who is called by duty or curiosity to travel beyond the limits of the well known and well surveyed districts, has an opportunity of adding something to the knowledge of the country which is already possessed. All new facts, thus acquired by officials or private individuals, are made known to the Government here, and, after being verified as far as possible by comparison with existing data, are recorded on the map. So that there is reason to expect that those great blank spaces will be filled up in time.

And think of what we know those great blanks must mean. We know there are great mountain ranges, the back-bone of the Peninsula, clothed with all the diversities of vegetable life, which the lowered temperature of elevated lands in the tropics makes possible. Then there must be a great water system, carrying off the moisture deposited on the high lands through the plains below. One of the latest discoveries is, that the great river Pahang, running up from the south, is but a branch of a much larger stream running from the north, and uniting itself with the Pahang at upwards of one hundred miles from its mouth.

In the dense Equatorial forests, which cover the greater part of these hill-sides and plains, forests, which are now only entered here and there by a few individual natives, to cut down the gutta producing trees, or to collect the few other natural products, of which the commercial value is known to them, and perhaps by charcoal burners for the purpose of turning some small portion of those glorious forests into portable fuel, what a hoard of wealth there is for the Botanist and the Naturalist; and what splendid possibilities for the Planter and the Merchant. Mr. Wallace tells us that, during the six years he was collecting in these latitudes, his Natural History specimens reached the enormous number of 125,660, of which a very large proportion were entirely new to Science. With such an example as that in view, it is not easy to over-estimate the gains to every branch of natural science, that might be expected from a thorough

exploration of those parts of this region, which, being far from the coast, have been seldom or never visited by any European. And if we look at the question from the utilitarian side, the strong opinion which has been recently arrived at by practical agriculturists, that the slopes of hills in this Peninsula are admirably adapted to the growth of both tea and coffee, added to the actual successes of the Dutch and other planters of tobacco on the other side of the Straits, gives one a very high idea of what might be done by capital and enterprise in so vast an extent of country, which has hitherto been profitless, for want of human inhabitants possessed of those resources by which alone the tyranny of nature can be overcome.

And this brings us to another set of subjects upon which accurate knowledge is very much needed. I mean the present human inhabitants of Malaya, their history, their manners and customs, their religion, and their language and literature. I shall however treat the whole subject very generally.

I think no one who has lived among them can be satisfied with what is generally said in books about the character and habits of the Malays. For instance, they are constantly spoken of as if, throughout the length and breadth of the countries where they are to be found, they were, in character and disposition, and in their ways of living and thinking, one and the same. But we know that this is very far from being the case. The Malay of the coast, who is best known to travellers, is quite a different being, in a hundred respects, from the Malay of the interior. And again, the inhabitants of one island, both the dwellers on the sea board, and the peasants inland, differ from those in another island, or in a distant part of the same island. Take as an example a case in which most of us can make the comparison from our own experience, and appreciate the points of difference. Contrast a peasant of Malacca or Johor with one of the Boyans, who enter our service in various capacities in Singapore; they are both Malays, but they are almost as unlike one another as a Hindoo and a Chinaman. The one is lively, courteous, and communicative; the other is dull, boorish, and shy. The one is idle and fond of sport, tho other is plodding and methodical; the one is very fond of talking, and little given to reading; the other has not much to say even to his own people, but keeps his master awake at night by reading or reciting, in a loud monotonous voice, long poems or stories, or chanting chapters of the Koran, which as a child he learned to read, but of which he does not understand a word. If it is said that we only see the Boyan out of his natural sphere, as an

emigrant, and a servant to a foreign master, I should reply that that is another strange mark of difference between him and the peasant of the Peninsula, whom it is very difficult to persuade either to leave his house, or to become a servant. I think it is important that these differences between the several Malayan races should be more clearly noted than they have been hitherto.

Then again in the matter of Religion there is the same want of accurate observation. Nearly all Malays are Mohamedans, and people seem to consider that when they have said that, they have said all that need be said on the subject, and that they have told you all there is to be told. But there are Mohamedans and Mohamedans; and I expect there is as much difference in the ideas of Religion held by a Mussulman of the West and an average Malay, as between those held by Mr. Spurgeon and the Pope of Rome. There could hardly be a more interesting study, than that of the special developments of Islam that are to be met with among the Malay race, both as to religious belief and moral practice. I remember that some years ago at Malacca, I was much interested in listening to a Malay relating to me the traditions of the Patriarchs, which had come down through many generations of Malays, having, doubtless, originated from Arab sources. It was quite evident, in many cases, that the narrative had in course of time assumed a distinctly local form and colouring. I intended to have made a collection of such traditions, but my removal to Singapore interrupted the study, and I have never had leisure or opportunity to return to it.

A careful study of the religious opinions and practices of the people would be not interesting only, but directly useful. Useful of course to the Missionary, as shewing him what ground he has in common with the man whose spiritual life he hopes to benefit, what are the real errors to be eradicated, and the real defects in faith and morals that have to be supplied. And useful to the governing class too, as discovering the true character and nature of the people to be governed, for as Carlyle says, "A man's religion is the chief fact with regard to him; a man's or a nation of men's." And he goes on to explain: "By religion I do not mean the Church-creed which he professes, the articles of faith which he will sign, and, in words or otherwise, assert; not this wholly; in many cases not this at all, * * * * * But the thing a man does practically believe; the thing a man does practically lay to heart concerning his vital relations to this mysterious universe, and his

“duty and destiny there, that is in all cases the primary thing for him, and creatively, determines all the rest. That is, his religion; and I say, if you tell me what that is, you tell me to a very great extent what the man is, what the kind of things he will do is.”

Then there is a great want of a good account of Malayan Literature. And in order that that may be given, it will be necessary to make a good collection of Malay writings. Great help may be rendered in this matter by persons possessing Malay manuscripts sending them in to the Library which this Society proposes to form, either as gifts, or as loans to be copied. I suppose there is no really good collection of Malay books in existence. We all know how the large one which Sir Stamford Raffles made was unfortunately burnt at sea on the way home. I know of none out here. I thought it likely that there might be such a thing in the British Museum; and when I was in England the year before last I went to see. They told me that there were Malay books but they were undescribed, and their contents and value were unknown. However the Librarian kindly gave me every facility for examining them myself. I found that the whole collection amounted to some thirty volumes most of them purchased from Mr. Crawford in 1842. I hope that the Museum did not pay a very large price for them. The manuscripts were chiefly *Shair* and *Hikayat*, poems and romances, many of them incomplete, some bearing evident marks of having been copied for European reading, and more or less adapted to European ideas. There were several examples of the *Sual Jawab*, or Religious Catechism, and some printed books in the inferior style of typography, which may be seen any day by the curious in the book-shops in Kampong Glam. One cannot call this a good collection, but I rather doubt if there is a much better one to be found. If one is ever to be made it should be done at once. For Malay manuscripts are becoming more and more difficult to obtain. The introduction of printed books has not at present tended to preserve the older literature. The Educational works which have been published for the use of schools, and the weekly newspapers, will probably, for some time to come satisfy a not too keen appetite for reading; and the manuscripts (never very numerous) are likely to be less prized, and more rarely copied; and many will no doubt be lost for ever, unless an effort is made to discover and preserve them.

About the non-Malayan aboriginal races I will only say that, though much has been written about them, there remains much

to be written. Probably they are not all known. Those unexplored regions of which we have been speaking are the very places in which one might expect to find them, driven back into the jungle by the advance of even the Malay notion of civilization. And the fortunate man who discovers anything about them should learn all he can at once, and put it down in writing at once, before an irruption of the "orang putih," * or, as I have heard M. Maclay call them, the "semut putih," † coming into their retired haunts has the usual effect of causing them to dwindle more and more, and get more and more absorbed among the most sympathetic of their native neighbours, till in a little time, they and all their peculiarities of speech, of manners and customs, and ways of thought, disappear from off the face of the earth.

I have only mentioned a very few of those paths along which the Society hopes to go in pursuit of knowledge. There is no doubt about the fact that there is plenty of work to be done. It remains for me just to indicate the means by which we hope that some of it may get done.

The first is by Association. The weak point in Mr. Logan's brave attempt was that he was alone responsible for the management of the Journal. He seems to have been most heartily supported at first, and he had a brilliant success; but any one may see from the table of contents that, as time went on, the burden began to fall on him with a weight which no man out here would be likely to sustain long. I do not know what it was that made him give up the undertaking in 1862, but I should think, from the look of the thing, that the want of sufficient co-operation had something to do with it. And, as must happen to an undertaking which depends, in the main, upon the energy and enthusiasm of a single individual, when he gave up the work it came utterly to an end. It is to be hoped that this danger will be averted by our uniting ourselves in a Society. A Society, if it starts with a good stock of vital power, and has a definite end to accomplish, may expect to be long-lived. Individuals are removed, and some lose the little interest they ever had in the matter and drop away. This is to be looked for. But others remain; and new members are constantly enlisted to fill up the ranks. I think we have every reason to consider that we do make our start with a considerable amount of vitality. The number of members, as we have just heard, is now nearly a hundred; and considering how short a time has elapsed

* "White men." † "White ants."

since the matter was first mooted, I think that fact alone shews that a great deal of interest is felt in the objects which those who first moved in it had at heart.

And the time is a propitious one for many reasons. I will only mention one. The opening of the Native States has placed a small band of Englishmen within reach of some of the least known parts of the Peninsula. I am happy to say that every one of the Residents has joined us, and several of the other officers who are stationed with them. Some of these gentlemen are already well known for their extensive research in some of the questions that are most interesting to us. And every one of them has a grand opportunity of acquiring large stores of information, and of facilitating the acquisition of it by others. I should think it must be an encouragement and a solace to men living in the isolated positions in which they are placed, to feel that the results of their labour and observation need not be consigned to the respectable oblivion of blue-books, but may be communicated at once to a sympathizing and appreciative public.

Another means by which the Society is to work is by the monthly General Meetings, of which this is the first. At these meetings some of the papers communicated to the Society will be read, and the subjects of them discussed. Gatherings of this kind, for purely intellectual purposes, are rather a new feature in our Colonial life, and I think a most desirable one; and we may hope that the conversations we shall have here will tend to keep up an interest in the proceedings, and perhaps set some of us upon studying subjects which we have neglected before.

The Journal is of course the chief instrument by the help of which the work we have in hand is to be attempted. It is proposed, for the present, to publish a number every six months, beginning in July next. The number of contributions already promised shews that we are not for the present, at all events, likely to be short of matter; and if the supply should continue as abundant as it promises to be the Committee may think it right to try a more frequent issue. But that of course must depend very much upon the reception which the first number meets with. For however learned, and however enthusiastic the Society may be, it will not be able to express its learning, or give vent to its ardour in paper and printer's ink without funds.

The last feature of the scheme is the Library. It is proposed to make a small and very special collection of the books which are the best authorities upon these countries, and which will be guides to students, and helps to collectors. It may perhaps be

asked whether the Raffles Library is not sufficient. It is in fact a great deal more than sufficient in one way, but insufficient in others. I need not say that a very large number of the attractive looking volumes on those shelves would not be of much use to such a Society as this. And, on the other hand, a great many books, &c., required for the purposes of the Society, would not be necessary in a general collection. As I have said before, I hope that one important feature of the Library will be as complete a collection as possible of the books that have been written in the Malay and kindred languages. In the Library, too, will be found, I hope, many M. S. communications to the Society, such as notices of short Journeys, which though not of sufficient importance to be printed, yet deserve to be carefully preserved for reference.

This then is the Society, its work and its *modus operandi*. I cannot but regret that your choice of a President for this year has not fallen upon some one who would have done better justice to a great subject. But the objects we are aiming at speak for themselves, and I think we have every reason to be sanguine in our expectation that the Society may take a worthy and honoured place among those institutions which are conferring benefits upon mankind, by removing a part of the ignorance and misconception, which hide from our view some of the most wonderful works of God.
